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Europe at the Epicenter of National Politics: The Attitudes of Greek Political Elites Towards the European Union and the Economic Crisis

Yannis Tsirbas & Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos*

Abstract: »Europa am Epizentrum nationaler Politik. Die Einstellungen der griechischen politischen Eliten zu EU und Wirtschaftskrise«. This article presents new research on the Europeaness of Greek political elites under the economic crisis. It registers the views of a sample of 74 Greek Members of Parliament (MPs) on European integration and the handling of the economic crisis by the European Union (EU). The ENEC survey, which was conducted in 2014, shows that Greek MPs continue to be attached to Europe, but evaluate negatively the role of EU's institutions during the economic crisis. They mostly view European integration positively, but are skeptical about the representativeness of EU organs. There is a discernible set of "core attitudes" which constitute the Europeaness of Greek MPs, but there is also a set of issues on which MPs are clearly divided. The dominant dimension of conflict within Greek political elites is the issue of economic austerity packages, i.e., the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), as since 2010 EU's management of the crisis has become the epicenter of Greece's domestic politics. The two party, SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government that was formed after the January 2015 elections was not a surprise given the close proximity of these two parties on their stance towards the MoUs and the EU.

Keywords: Political elites, European integration, identity, representation, Europeaness.

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1. Introduction¹

National political elites in Europe tend to understand European integration in the context of their more immediate national political, economic and cultural environment and take a stance on European Union (EU) affairs based on the following two items: first, on whether and how the EU benefits their country and, second, on the performance of their political party and evolution of their own political career (Best 2012). Greece is no exception to this pattern, as, until the economic crisis struck, Greek Members of Parliament (MPs) typically held an instrumentalist view of EU-Greece relations (Nezi, Sotiropoulos and Toka 2009; Nezi, Sotiropoulos and Toka 2010; Freire, Tsatsanis and Tsirbas 2014).

In other words, Greek parliamentarians understood European integration less in normative terms and more in terms of, first, a supra-national project which offered a safe place to anchor a country which had become a consolidated democracy only after the fall of the Colonels' regime (1974) and was periodically influenced by tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean; and, second, a EU laid-out pathway to economic development and improved living standards, i.e., an opportunity to converge with the rest of West European countries.

Indeed, after Greece joined the then European Communities in 1981, political stability and improving economic performance, despite occasional lapses into periods of high inflation and persisting unemployment, characterized the path which the country followed (Kazakos and Ioakimidis 1996, Tsoukalis 1997; Dimitrakopoulos and Passas 2004; Pagoulatos 2014). Stability and economic development were clearly aided by the inflow of EU funds into Greece, based on EU's agricultural, regional and cohesion policies, to the point that Greeks and their political elites may have perceived the EU as a "milking cow" (Scheuer 1999, 37). In this context, Greek political elites overall mostly calculated that the potential benefits from Greece's engagement with the EU outweighed potential losses. Unavoidably they colored their views on Europe using the colors of the left, right or center ideology of their political party, with the conservatives being steadily pro-EU, the socialists abandoning their anti-EU stance after the benefits of EU integration for Greece became obvious (Verney 1996) and the much less consequential communists altogether refusing to accept EU.

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Taking into account this instrumental relation to the EU, the majority of Greek parliamentarians had settled down to the idea that the EU had become a constant, albeit somewhat distant, aspect of their political universe. In fact, the EU did not loom large in Greek domestic politics, until the economic crisis struck. There was no national referendum on the EU, prior to Greece's 1981 accession to the then European Communities or on the occasion of any major EU treaty. Moreover, relatively little parliamentary debate over EU treaties, let alone EU policies, took place in the Greek parliament until 2009-2010. At that time point the negative effects of the global financial crisis combined with the culmination of long-term trends of running state budget deficits and negative current account imbalances and produced an implosion of the Greek state's finances. Compared to other Eurozone Member-States, Greece was hit the earliest and probably the most by the economic crisis (Storm and Naastepad 2014). Intense political debates on the role of the EU in the Greek crisis took place in the Greek parliament and media.

When in the first semester of 2010, the Greek government resorted to the rescue mechanism put together by the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a new era of EU-Greece relations dawned upon Greece. It naturally affected the place and significance of Europe in Greek domestic politics and provided a stimulus which influenced and polarized the attitudes of Greek parliamentarians, as this article will argue.

After 2009 Greece became and still is dependent on external financial aid, coming predominantly from the EU. National economic and other public policies were co-produced by Greek officials and the representatives of the three aforementioned international actors (the 'Troika'), in a process during which Greek government elites succumbed to the guidelines of the 'Troika', who represented the country's lenders. And EU organizations and lender countries in the Eurozone closely monitored the evolution of the "Greek Programme", as the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed between Greece and its creditors in 2010 and again in 2012 came to be known.

In the course of and because of these developments, the EU largely affected party politics in Greece (Verney 2014). Metaphorically speaking, after the economic crisis erupted in Greece, the EU traveled from the perimeter to the epicenter of the Greek political scene and established itself there. The way the EU and successive Greek governments handled the crisis provoked a series of reactions, reflected not only in the reinforcement of erstwhile small political parties on the Left (SYRIZA) and the rise of new political parties on the Right (the nationalist Independent Greeks-ANEL and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn – GD), but also in the "core attitudes" of Greek parliamentarians constituting their Europeanness.

In what follows, we are going to present and interpret such attitudes of parliamentarians. We are going to focus on their national and European identity;

perceptions of threats to the EU; trust in EU institutions; allocation of public policy-competencies to national- and EU-levels of decision-making; conceptions of the current and future status of European integration; and finally perceptions of performance of EU institutions during the crisis. We will argue that (in contrast to the past) such “core attitudes” towards the EU are pivotal for the formation of new cleavages in Greek party politics. Such cleavages were once only marginally affected by the status of EU-Greek relations, but are now heavily shaped, if not completely over-determined, by how Greek politicians interpret and evaluate the changing relations between Greece and the EU under the crisis.

The data used for our analysis come from the European National Elites and the Crisis (ENEC) project, which was conducted in Greece, as well as in nine other European countries in 2014. A total of 74 Greek MPs were interviewed in Athens between February and October 2014, using a structured questionnaire. In order for the final sample to be representative of the national assembly, quota sampling was applied, in terms of party, gender and whether the MP was a newcomer in parliament or not. The only exception in terms of sample representativeness is the Greek Communist Party (KKE) which did not issue a permission to its MPs to participate as interviewees in this study (or any other similar study, for that matter). Our research refers to the parliament elected in June 2012 and dissolved in December 2014.

1.1 The Political Context

In order to put the attitudes of MPs in the context of Greece’s party system, a very brief presentation of Greek political parties follows. New Democracy-ND is a centre-right political party which has been one of the two most dominant political forces since 1974, alternating in power with the social democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement-PASOK. ND and PASOK dominated the Greek party system in 1974-2012. The twin, aptly labeled ‘earthquake’, elections of May and June 2012 (Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014) saw the rise of SYRIZA to the status of the main opposition party in the Greek parliament. Also this was the first time in recent decades that seven parties entered the parliament, including the afore-mentioned neo-Nazi GD, as previously far fewer parties were represented in parliament. After the earthquake, elections of 2012, ND and PASOK formed a coalition government. At that point, because of its central role in the signing and implementation of bail-out agreements, PASOK had already suffered severe electoral losses. Democratic Left-DIMAR, which was founded in 2010 after a split from SYRIZA, also took part in the coalition government, only to exit the government one year later, in 2013. The parliament of 2012-2014 also included the aforementioned KKE, GD and ANEL parties.

As already noted, since the onset of the crisis fierce political debates have taken place on whether Greece or the EU were to be blamed for the crisis and

whether the measures provided by MoUs were appropriate or even necessary. A major erosion of social trust and a great delegitimation of the political system as a whole preceded the crisis and paved the way for the dealignment of the Greek political and party system (Verney 2014, 20).

Since our elite survey was finished, two parliamentary elections were held in Greece. These took place in January 2015 and again in September 2015, with a similar election outcome (SYRIZA came first, ND trailed far behind it). Moreover, a national referendum was held between these elections, in July 2015, with the question of whether or not Greece should adopt a third bail-out agreement proposed at the time by the EU. The referendum was vested by some political forces, like ND and PASOK, as a decision upon Greece's membership in the Eurozone and the EU altogether. These two parties, along with the newly formed centre/centre-left party "the River", called for a "yes" vote (the latter party did not exist before mid-2014 and won parliamentary representation for the first time only in 2015). On the other side, the governing coalition of SYRIZA and ANEL parties called for a "no" vote, describing the referendum as an opportunity to curb austerity policies and a desire to reshape EU politics. Finally, the "no" vote won with 61 per cent. However, one week later the Greek government agreed with the EU on a third, austerity-driven, bail-out program.

As shown in Table 1, neither in the January 2015 parliamentary election nor in the corresponding election of September 2015 did a party hold the absolute majority of 151 (out of the total of 300) seats needed to form a single-party majority government. In both instances, a coalition government of SYRIZA and ANEL was formed.

Table 1: Greece: June 2012, January and September 2015 Parliamentary Election Results and Allocation of Parliamentary Seats

	September 2015 (%)	September 2015 No of seats	January 2015 (%)	January 2015 No of seats	June 2012 (%)	June 2012 No of seats
SYRIZA	35.5	145	36.3	149	26.9	71
ND	28.1	75	27.8	76	29.7	129
GD	7	18	6.3	17	6.9	18
PASOK*	6.3	17	4.7	13	12.3	33
KKE	5.6	15	5.5	15	4.5	12
The River	4.1	11	6.1	17	-	-
ANEL	3.7	10	4.8	13	7.5	20
DIMAR**	-	-	0.5	-	6.3	17
Other	9.7	9	8.5	-	5.9	-
Total	100	300	100	300	100	300

* Allied with DIMAR in the elections of September 2015.

** Allied with Ecologists-Greens in the elections of January 2015.

Source: Greek Ministry of Interior (<[http://ekloges.yves.gr/current/v/public/index.html#{"cls": "main","params":{}}](http://ekloges.yves.gr/current/v/public/index.html#{)>).

It is worth noting, as shown in Table 1, that in the January 2015 elections the pro-EU left party DIMAR nearly vanished from the Greek political system, and it has been replaced, at least in terms of electoral influence, by a new player, the “River” party.

2. The Shifting Views of Greek Parties and Elites Regarding Greece in the EU

2.1 European Identity

One of the “core attitudes” of Europeanness is the European identity of Greek parliamentarians. European identity can be measured as the degree of attachment to Europe, contrasted to the degree of attachment to two other levels of political community, namely Greece and region (by which we mean electoral district). Attachment to Europe is weaker (77 per cent) than attachment to region, i.e., electoral district, (86.5 per cent) and Greece (100 per cent). However, among Greek MPs in 2014 attachment to Europe is higher than in 2007², when it was 50 per cent (Table 2).

Table 2: Attachment to Different Levels of Community. Percentage Distribution of Responses (Very/Somewhat Attached)

	2007*	2014
Attachment to region	86.5	98.6
Attachment to Greece	93.6	100
Attachment to Europe	80.2	77

* InTune project.

Compared to 2007, attachment to Europe slightly increased among Greek MPs in 2014, however remained at relatively high levels. This result should be seen in the light of a consensus among all Greek elites of the Left and the Right which was formed the hard way, namely, after all elites realized that the country could not stand on its own feet to manage the crisis. Greek elites probably realized that external aid was necessary and that the only available life-sustaining device was provided by the EU. After all, even SYRIZA, which in the past had voiced very strong Eurosceptic views, has remained faithful to its

² In 2007 the 'InTune' (standing for 'Integrated and United') research project was conducted on European and national identity, representation, and the scope of governance. It involved surveys of elites and mass publics in 16 EU Member-States and two candidate Member-States, on the basis of a common standardized questionnaire. Data from the 'InTune' survey of 2007 for Greece is used in this paper in order to identify changes across time.

own version of Europeanism, namely an anti-neoliberal European project (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, 131, 138; Nikolakakis 2016).

This is also borne out by the results of Table 3. Despite the fact that MPs of SYRIZA are not as enthusiastic as the MPs of other parties (ND, PASOK, DIMAR) towards Europe, still their attachment to Europe is quite high and certainly much higher than that of the two far right parties, ANEL and Golden Dawn (GD). PASOK's MPs are the most attached to Europe (100 per cent), followed by those of ND (87.5 per cent). Compared to MPs of ND and PASOK, SYRIZA's MPs are much less attached to Europe (73.7 per cent) (Table 3).

Table 3: Attachment to Europe, Percentage Distribution of Responses by Party *

	Total	ND	SYRIZA	PASOK	ANEL	GD	DIMAR	Indep.
Very/somewhat attached	77	87.5	73.7	100	33.3	0	100	66.7

[χ^2 (6, N = 74) = 25.866, p = 0.000, Cramer's V= 0.591]

* Since ANEL, Golden Dawn, DIMAR and Independent MPs have small Ns, hereafter results for these parties are considered indicative. Results of the 2007 InTune survey on this variable are not available.

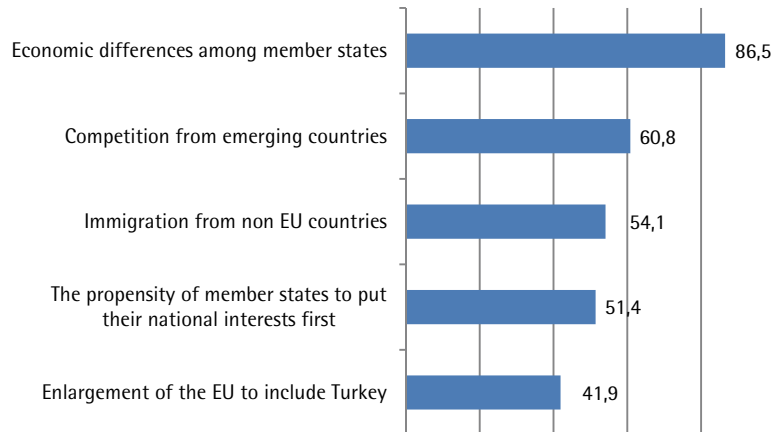
2.2 Perceived Threats to Europe and the EU

It is quite interesting that Greek parliamentarians believe that the two biggest threats to the EU are economic in nature, namely economic differences among Member States (86.5 per cent) and the competition from emerging economies, e.g., Asian economies (60.8 per cent). The prominence of economic threats in the minds of Greek MPs should be interpreted in the light of the grave economic crisis which Greece was undergoing during the time our interviews were conducted and also in the context of the popular perception of the EU in Greece as a major source of improvement of Greece's material wealth (Pagoulatos 2014). In brief, the EU was perceived as a source of economic prosperity for the country much more than a project of political or cultural integration. After all, even before the onset of the economic crisis, the framework through which Greek policy makers used to understand the position of Greece in the EU was a framework of national exceptionalism (Pagoulatos 2004). Immigration from non-EU countries is the third most important perceived threat to the EU, with 54.1 per cent of Greek parliamentarians considering it to be "a big" or "quite a big" threat (Figure 1). It has to be noted, however, that the interviews were concluded in 2014, when refugee/migration issues had not yet acquired centre-stage in EU politics, as they did in 2015 and 2016.

The propensity of EU Member States to put their national interests first is the fourth most important perceived threat to the EU (51.4 per cent). This is not a surprise given that in Greece the process of European integration has often been understood as an inter-governmental process (Kazakos and Ioakimidis

1994). Finally, despite the long-time mistrust between Greece and Turkey, enlargement of the EU to include Turkey is considered a threat by 41.9 per cent of Greek parliamentarians. This is a comparatively low score and reflects a shift in Greece's foreign policy, dating back to 1999, when a rapprochement between the two countries was couched in the context of the EU.

Figure 1: Threats to the EU (A Big Threat/Quite a Big Threat) as Perceived by Greek MPs



Results of the 2007 InTune survey on this variable are not available.

2.3 Trust and Efficacy of European Institutions

The trust of MPs in European institutions has been on the decline since 2007. As already noted, the 'Troika' entrusted to monitor Greece's successive economic adjustment programmes since 2010, included higher-level officials of the European Commission. Unsurprisingly, as shown in Table 4, trust in European Commission (EC) has seen the largest decline, with the mean score being 4.6 in 2014 from 6.0 in 2007. The European Parliament (EP) is the most trusted institution amongst Greek parliamentarians, with the mean score being 6.7 in 2014 down from 7.1 in 2007.

Party affiliation is a statistically significant explanatory variable of trust in European institutions, with ND's and PASOK's MPs showing the most trust and SYRIZA's MPs showing the least trust. (Table 5).

Also, parliamentarians self-positioning on the right and on the centre of the political spectrum show more trust in European institutions than parliamentarians self-positioning on the left (no table). This finding confirms the suggested relationship between ideological self-placement and trust in the various European institutions (Nezi, Sotiropoulos and Toka 2009).

Table 4: Greek MPs: Level of Trust in EU Institutions (Mean Scores 2007 and 2014)

	Political Elites 2007*	Political Elites 2014							
		Total	ND	SYRIZA	PASOK	ANEL	GD	DIMAR	Indep.
Trust in the European Parliament	7.1	6.7	7.7	5.3	7.1	7.7	3.8	8.3	6
Trust in the European Commission	6.0	4.6	6.6	2	5.1	3.7	2.4	5.3	2.7

Note for tables hereafter: Trust is measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 indicates no trust. European parliament [F(6,67)=7.722, p=0.000], European Commission [F(6, 67)=22.199, p=0.000].
* InTune project.

Regarding the handling of the crisis, the MPs' evaluation of EU institutions is overall negative. The European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB) are evaluated with 4.1 on an 11-point scale (0.0-10.0), where zero is the most negative point. The European Council is evaluated slightly higher, with 4.5 (Table 5). As expected, MPs of governing parties which had signed Greece's bail-out agreements of 2010 and 2012 and implemented the corresponding policies have a more positive evaluation of the EU institutions which handled the crisis. Indeed ND's parliamentarians evaluate the European Commission with 5.8, the European Council with 6.3 and the ECB with 6.4. The corresponding figures for PASOK, which was the other major party in the pro-austerity coalition government of 2011-2014, are 4.9 for the Commission, 5.5 for the Council and 5.9 for the ECB. Naturally, the opposite holds for the MPs of the then opposition parties, especially SYRIZA, the MPs of which evaluated the ECB with 0.8, the European Commission with 1.4 and the European Council with 1.7 (Table 4).

Table 5: Evaluation of EU Institutions' Role During the Crisis in 2014 (Mean Scores by Party)

	Total	ND	SYRIZA	PASOK	ANEL	GD	DIMAR	Indep.
European Commission	4.1	5.8	1.4	4.9	3.7	2.6	4	3.7
European Council	4.5	6.3	1.7	5.5	4	3	4	3.7
European Central Bank	4.1	6.4	0.8	5.9	2.7	0.8	4	3.7

European Commission [F(6, 67)=13.389, p=0.000], the European Council [F(6, 67)=12.919, p=0.000] and the European Central Bank [F(6, 67)=33.293, p=0.000]. Results of the 2007 InTune survey on this variable are not available.

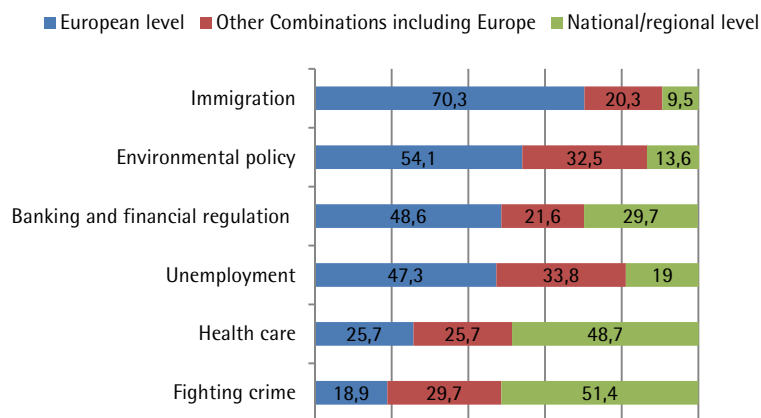
The attitudes of MPs on how EU institutions managed the crisis are also differentiated by their self-placement on the left-right axis. More concretely, MPs on

the right give the most positive evaluations, while those on the left the most negative, in statistically significant relationships (no table). This is an expected outcome, given the harsh criticism of austerity policies by the Greek Left already since the start of the economic crisis (Tsakatika and Lisi 2013, 15).

2.4 Allocation of Public Policy Competencies and Scope of Governance

According to Greek MPs, immigration (70.3 per cent), environmental policy (54.1 per cent), banking and financial regulation (48.6 per cent) and unemployment (47.3 per cent) are policy areas that should be dealt with at the European level. On the other hand, health care provision and fighting crime are policy areas thought to be better dealt with at the national level (48.7 per cent and 51.4 per cent respectively, Figure 2).

Figure 2: Preferred Level for the Formulation of Policies



2.5 Conceptions of Europe

The absolute majority of MPs in our sample support the process of furthering the unification of the EU: 54 per cent of Greek parliamentarians are positioned on the three most positive points of the eleven-point scale, being in favour of having a more unified EU. Evaluation is measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 denotes an absolute view that “unification has gone too far” and 10 an absolute view that “unification should be strengthened”. The mean score of our sample on this scale is 7 (Table 6).

With regard to further promoting EU’s unification, the parliamentarians of PASOK score the highest (mean score of 9.1). ND’s MPs follow with a mean score of 8.2. SYRIZA’s MPs have a mean score of 5.6, which is slightly above

the middle point of the scale and underlines the fact that the need for further unification of the EU is widely acknowledged among Greek political elites, although Greek parties, which these elites belong to, do not agree on the appropriate policy mix.

Table 6: "Has European Unification Gone too far or Should it be Strengthened?" (Mean Scores by Party)

	Total	ND	SYRIZA	PASOK	ANEL	GD	DIMAR	Indep.
Mean scores	7.0	8.2	5.6	9.1	6	1.8	8.3	6.7

$F(6, 66)=8.568, p=0.000$.

The opinions about further promoting European unification are differentiated by left-right self-placement in a statistically significant relationship. MPs on the Centre favour the furthering of EU's unification the most, with a mean score of 8.1, followed by MPs on the right (mean score 7.4, no table).

With regard to the issue of supranational or intergovernmental scope of EU governance, agreement with the statement "the European Commission ought to become the true government of the European Union" is at 52.7 per cent amongst Greek MPs, while disagreement is at 47.3 per cent (Table 7, below). In other words, Greek political elites are divided on this issue. This is a division which can be interpreted in the context of very heated debates in the Greek parliament and mass media on the role of the Troika, which included representatives of the Commission, in the formulation and even the day-to-day management of public policies, while the Greek crisis was unfolding.

2.6 The Meaning of Europeanness for Greek Political Elites

The meaning of Europeanness among Greek political elites can be operationalized with an eye to how Greeks have conceptualized the EU over time. As already argued in the introduction to this article, Greeks have often understood the EU in utilitarian terms, something which is particularly true for the Greek Parliament (Sotiropoulos 2015). This is the primary but not exclusive dimension of Europeanness in the eyes of Greek elites.

Indeed, there have been instances at which Greece has sought to play a larger role than its diplomatic clout and the size of its economy would allow, such as, for instance, during the Greek Presidency of the EU in 2003, when the Greek government convened a special summit on the crisis in Iraq and in another summit also orchestrated EU's commitment to the European perspective of West Balkan countries (the Thessaloniki Agenda of June 2003). Overall, however, Greek elites have primarily thought about what the EU can do for Greece than what Greece can do for the EU (a tendency not limited to the case of Greece). It is in this context that we should interpret the finding that more than three quarters (77 per cent) of Greek MPs believe that Greece has benefit-

ed from Greece's membership in the EU, while only 17.6 per cent believe that it has not benefited (no table). SYRIZA's MPs are divided on this issue: one half believes that Greece has benefited from EU membership, whereas the other half rejects this view. By contrast, MPs of PASOK and ND agree the most with the view that EU membership has been beneficiary for Greece, with 100 and 96.9 per cent respectively (no table).

Additionally, Greek MPs overall agree that in ten years there should be "more help for the regions" (98.6 per cent) and a common social security system (81.1 per cent), reminding us that the previously-mentioned notion of the EU as a milking cow is not abandoned. Moreover, Greek political elites agree that "the powers of the European Parliament should be strengthened" (83.8 per cent). It can be asserted that the latter finding is related to the generalized discontent caused by EU's perceived poor responsiveness to the varying and changing situation of its Member States: 95.9 per cent of the respondents somewhat or strongly agree that "the interests of some member-states carry too much weight at the EU level" and 83.6 per cent somewhat or strongly agree that "those who make decisions at the EU level do not take enough account of the interests of Greece".

Table 7: Summary of "Core Attitudes" of Europeanness for Greek Political Elites (Percentage of Agreement)

	%
(In ten years) there should be more help for the regions	98.6
The interests of some member-states carry too much weight at the EU level	95.9
Economic differences between member-states are a threat to the EU	86.5
The powers of the European Parliament should be strengthened	83.8
Those who make decisions at the EU level do not take enough account of the interests of Greece	83.6
(In ten years) there should be common social security	81.1
Greece has on balance benefited from being a member of the European Union	77.0
Immigration should be dealt at the European level	70.3
The European Commission ought to become the true government of the European Union	52.7

In view of the above, we could summarize Europeanness for the Greek political elites as follows: most MPs view the EU in a positive light and believe that European unification should be further strengthened. European unification should take a direction which, on the one hand, would entail economic support for weaker Member States and curb economic differences among them and, on the other hand, include more responsiveness, possibly through the strengthening of the role of the EP and the transfer of powers from the national to the supranational level as far as migration policy is concerned (Table 7).

3. The Main Dimensions of Greek Political Elite's Attitudes Towards the EU

Now that we have identified what unites Greek parliamentarians, we also have to see, more systematically, what divides them when it comes to EU issues. In other words, from the analysis presented so far stems a need to further identify what is the main dimension which shapes the different attitudes of the Greek political elites towards the EU. Up to this point we have established that views about the institutions and the prospects of the EU are mainly differentiated according to the party to which MPs belong and to ideological self-positioning. Furthermore, we are interested in detecting latent variables which could explain MPs' opinions and stances in a more parsimonious way, by reducing the original number of variables. In order to identify possible latent variables or dimensions that could explain attitudinal differences among MPs, a principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted. PCA is generally used to simplify datasets by reducing data while, at the same time, not losing vital information. The new variables, which are called principal components, are linear functions of the original ones.

Then, the components derived from the PCA are used as independent variables in a discriminant analysis, where the dependent variable is the party affiliation of the MPs. Discriminant analysis is used to determine the optimal combination of the independent variables (i.e. "functions"), which explains the classification of cases in different categories of the dependent variable (Fisher 1936; Friedman 1989). In our case, PCA helps to attribute meaning to the structure of competition and conflict among Greek MPs. The PCA was introduced by Pearson (1901) and was further developed by Hotelling (1933) (see also Jolliffe 2002; 1972; 1973). By using it, we seek to determine the degree to which the discovered issue dimensions can serve to discriminate or distinguish among parties.

Functions are interpreted in terms of standardized coefficients for each independent variable. The larger the standardized coefficient, the more the respective latent dimension contributes to the discrimination among parties. In order to portray the relevant positions and distances among parties across each function, group centroids are also employed. Typically, only statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) components and functions are presented, and this is what we do in the rest of this article.

3.1 Results

We have incorporated all the relevant variables (items) in our initial PCA, while at the same time we have explored new possibilities with items which were not that obviously related to our research questions. Then, we have dropped all the variables which did not load to the main components or were

loaded highly to both of them. Finally, eight items regarding attitudes of Greek MPs towards the EU were used in the PCA, which returned two components that together explain almost 60 per cent of the total variance (Table 8). The first component is dominated by items capturing a Pro-European/Eurocritical dimension, while the second component comprises items that refer to a Federalism/Intergovernmentalism division. Of course, only questions related to the EU and Europe were asked in the context of the ENEC study, so the components extracted here represent only the realm of European-related values and attitudes.

Table 8: Greek MPs-Principal Components Analysis

Agree-Disagree	Pro-European / Eurocritical	Federalism- Intergovernmentalism
The EU endangers the integrity of the Greek cultural system	0.785	0.137
Achievements of welfare system in Greece are endangered by the EU legislation	0.780	-0.353
The EU endangers the quality of democracy in Greece	0.747	-0.313
EU decisions endanger economic growth in Greece	0.737	-0.289
Most important decisions concerning the EU should be taken by a majority of all European citizens via a European popular referendum	0.695	-0.051
The European Commission ought to become the true government of the European Union	0.129	0.875
Some say that we should have a single European Union Army	-0.417	0.611
The Member States ought to remain the central actors of the European Union	0.182	-0.523
Eigenvalues	3.485	1.288
% variance	37.9	21.8

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Our discriminant analysis produced two statistically significant functions, but one of them comprises almost 96.7 per cent of the total variance (Table 9). In this dominant function (or dimension of conflict), the component with the highest standardized coefficient is Pro-Europeanism / Eurocriticism. When plotting the relevant position of parties across the Pro-Europeanism / Eurocriticism dimension, a pro-bailout agreement/anti-bailout agreement set-up is revealed, with three parties, namely GD, SYRIZA and ANEL on the one end and another three parties, namely DIMAR, PASOK and ND on the other. This means that the main dimension of conflict regarding European issues is, in fact, the pro/anti memorandum divide, which seems to give meaning to the Pro-Europeanism/Eurocriticism dimension. In any case, due to the low number of cases in our sample, the results of the PCA and discriminant analysis depicted

in Table 9 are considered only indicative. Further research may be necessary in order to confirm the results shown in this table.

Table 9: Greek MPs Discriminant Analysis (N=69)*

Function 1: Canonical correlation: 0.85 / 96.7% of variance

Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients		Structural Coefficients	
Pro European/ Eurocritical	Federalism- Intergovernmentalism	Pro European/ Eurocritical	Federalism- Intergovernmentalism
1.09	-0.88	0.65	-0.34

Mean location of MPs on the function (group centroids)



*Only the most powerful statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) function is presented. The other statistically significant function is responsible for only 3.3 per cent of total variance and is dominated by the Federalism-Intergovernmentalism factor, with a standardized canonical discriminant function coefficient of 0.75 and a structural coefficient of 0.94. The relevant position of parties on the second function remotely resembles a Left-Right dimension.

3.2 The Coalition Government of SYRIZA-ANEL and the EU

The formation of a SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government twice within a year (just after the elections of January and September 2015) was in accordance with the above presented discriminant analysis, in which these two parties were on the same side of the dominant dimension of Pro-Europeanism/Eurocriticism already before the elections of 2015. Also, it has to be noted that even though the aforementioned two elections have already been held since our interviews were conducted, we maintain that Greece political landscape is not that different, since our research still refers to the “new” party system and correlations of power that emerged after the elections of 2012, when the Greek party system was completely revamped. Therefore, we can construct the combined ‘worldview’ of today’s SYRIZA and ANEL (SYRIZA-ANEL) parliamentary majority toward the EU. This is so even though the total number of MPs of these two parties changed after the January and September 2015 elections, when SYRIZA obtained 145 seats and ANEL 10 seats, compared to 71 and 20 respectively, in the parliament of 2012-2014 on which our research was conducted.

In Table 10 there is a summary of SYRIZA-ANEL’s MPs views and attitudes on several important issues in comparison to the rest of Greek parliamentarians. A main conclusion is that SYRIZA-ANEL’s MPs, taken as a group, are systematically less pro-European and more skeptical towards EU institutions

than the rest of MPs. Compared to their colleagues from other political parties, SYRIZA-ANEL's MPs feel less attached to Europe and trust less the European Parliament and the European Commission, despite the fact that, regarding the EP, the mean score of trust is above average, 5.6.

Table 10: Comparison of SYRIZA-ANEL's MPs with the Rest of Greek Parliamentarians in Core Views and Attitudes (Percent)

	Total	SYRIZA-ANEL	Others*
Attachment to Europe (% Very/somewhat attached)	77	68.2	80.8
"Greece's interests are not taken into account by those making decisions at the EU level" (% Strongly/somewhat agree)	83.6	100	76.5
Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the EU (% Very/Fairly satisfied)	36.5	4.5	50
The EU as a threat to economic growth in Greece (% Strongly/somewhat agree)	51.4	95.5	32.7
(In ten years) Common tax system (% approve/rather approve)	73	54.5	80.8
(In ten years) Common social security (% approve/rather approve)	81.1	68.2	86.5
(In ten years) Common foreign policy (% approve/rather approve)	74.3	54.5	82.7
Trust in the European Parliament (mean score 0-10)	6.7	5.6	7.2
Trust in the European Commission (mean score 0-10)	4.6	2.2	5.7
"Has European unification gone too far or should it be strengthened?" (mean score 0-10)	7.0	5.7	7.6

*MPs of all other parties. This categorization is done for presentation purposes, in order to flesh out the views of MPs of the SYRIZA-ANEL government coalition.

All of SYRIZA-ANEL's parliamentarians believe that Greece's interests are not adequately represented at the decision-making centers of the EU. At the same time, only 4.5 per cent of SYRIZA-ANEL's MPs are very or fairly satisfied by the way democracy works in the EU, a figure that rises to 50 per cent amongst the rest of parliamentarians. Moreover, 95.5 per cent of SYRIZA-ANEL MPs consider the EU as a threat to economic growth in Greece, as opposed to only 32.7 per cent of other parties' MPs and 51.4 per cent in total.

Regarding the prospects of further European unification, SYRIZA-ANEL's MPs are somewhat skeptical. Their mean score on the eleven-point scale (0-10) about the need for strengthening the unification process is 5.7, i.e., significantly less than the 7.6 score amongst the rest of parliamentarians. Furthermore, compared with the rest of MPs, the MPs of SYRIZA-ANEL are less in favour of any enhancement, in the next decade, of common taxation, social security system and foreign policy. However, even amongst SYRIZA-ANEL's MPs positive evaluations of common policies are held by the absolute majority of MPs.

Finally, a finding that can be considered as a harbinger of the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government is that the MPs of these two parties evaluate very

negatively the handling of the crisis by EU's institutions. On the eleven-point scale (0-10), where 0.0 means an absolutely negative evaluation, they evaluate the European Commission with a mean score of 1.7, the European Council with a mean score of 2.0 and the ECB with a very low 1.1.

In sum, SYRIZA and ANEL's MPs' views during the parliamentary term of June 2012-December 2014 confirm our claim that the dominant division amongst Greek political elites has to do with stances towards the EU. The two parties' MPs share a critical view of EU institutions in general and their role in the handling of the crisis in particular, while they are not as enthusiastic about the prospects of European integration as are their colleagues from most other parties. The above findings underline the fact that even before SYRIZA's electoral victory there was indeed common ground for the seemingly incongruous, in 'classic' left-right terms, coalition government between SYRIZA and ANEL that was formed after the January 2015 parliamentary elections.

4. Conclusion

The views of Greek MPs on the issue of European identity seem to somewhat follow pre-crisis patterns. Attachment to Europe remains strong. However, trust in EU institutions is on a steep decline and there is an overall negative evaluation of the way in which EU institutions managed the crisis. As expected, the above views and attitudes are differentiated mainly according to party affiliation and self-placement of MPs on the left-right axis. However, there is a wider acceptance of the need for furthering the European unification, although it would be logical to assert that different political affiliations and ideological predispositions of MPs would mean the attribution of different meanings to European unification.

Greek parliamentarians generally agree on the road which the EU should follow in the future: they desire economic help for the regional countries, the transfer of policy-making responsibilities regarding immigration, the environment and some structural finance issues to a supranational level as well as the strengthening of the European Parliament.

When it comes to threats to the EU, economic issues seem to be perceived as the most threatening, such as the economic differences between EU Member States and the competition from emerging economies outside of Europe. Hence, what unites Greek parliamentarians on European issues or their sense of Europeanness can be summarized as a positive European experience, as Greece has benefited from EU membership. The MPs' positive stance is complemented by their desire to see further economic support for the weak in Europe and more responsiveness of EU authorities at the decision-making level.

However, it has been clear from the above-presented findings that there are more than a few things that separate Greek political elites on European issues.

Notably, party affiliation and ideological self-placement are differentiating factors of Greek MPs' views and attitudes. Looking deeper, however, through the conduct of principal component and discriminant analyses, we have found out that there is an issue dimension, which mainly structures the differences of opinion among Greek MPs: this is pro-Europeanism/Eurocriticism. The plotting of political parties across the issue dimension of pro-Europeanism / Eurocriticism has revealed an arrangement of pro-bailout agreement parties on the one end and anti-bailout agreement parties on the other end of this dimension. This specific finding sheds light on the ostensibly bizarre coalition government between the radical left-wing SYRIZA and the right-wing nationalist ANEL, a coalition formation which occurred twice, both after the January and September 2015 elections. Especially concerning the views and attitudes of SYRIZA-ANEL MPs, this research has demonstrated that they were consistently more critical towards the EU and skeptical about its prospects, compared to the total of MPs.

In sum, our analysis has shown that the fiscal and financial crisis has not totally altered the "milking cow" perception of Greek MPs about the EU. Also, membership in the EU as a positive experience and the furthering of unification still enjoy a broad consensus. However, new features have been added to the Greek political elites' sense of Europeanness, mainly because of the negative evaluation of EU's handling of the financial crisis. These features include the need for fairer political representation in the EU and the resolution of thorny economy-related issues as the most crucial factors for EU's survival.

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